

8.0 PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE

The following parks have been dedicated in the City of Lowell.

Site Name	Acres
ALUMNI FIELD	5.94
BOATHOUSE SITE & GREENWAY	4.28
EDSON CEMETERY	50.95
EDWARDS STREET PARK	6.10
FRANCIS GATE PARK	11.42
HAMBLET CEMETERY	0.54
HILDRETH FAMILY CEMETERY	2.25
HUNT CEMETERY	0.66
JANAS SKATING RINK	7.95
LOWELL CEMETERY	82.64
LOWELL HERITAGE STATE PARK	118.0
McDermott RESERVOIR	17.14
MERRIMACK RIVER BIKE PATH	1.01
OLD CEMETERY	0.53
OLD ENGLISH CEMETERY	6.26
PAWTUCKETVILLE CEMETERY	0.20
POLISH CEMETERY	7.83
REGATTA FIELD	22.29
RIVER GREENWAY	0.30
RIVERFRONT PARK	5.00
SCHOOL STREET CEMETERY	1.11
ST PATRICKS CEMETERY	38.24
ST. PETER'S CEMETERY	23.19
VANDENBURG ESPLANADE	0.62
WESTLAWN CEMETERY	38.66
WOODBINE CEMETERY	0.76
WYMAN BIRD SANCTUARY	9.08
Total Acres	462.95

Although 463 acres may seem like a lot of open space it should be noted that one quarter of that number is located in the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest and 253.8 acres is cemetery land. If you deduct the amount of cemetery land from the total acres at today's population you would have less than 2 acres per 1000 resident of open space.

8.1 PUBLIC CONSERVATION AND RECREATION RESOURCES

This section includes all lands within the City of Lowell with current and potential conservation and recreation value to the residents of Lowell. City properties are under the management of the following authorities:

- * School Department
- * Parks Department
- * Fire Department
- * Water Department
- * Department of Public Works
- * Sewer Department

- * Building Administrator
- * Cemeteries

There are also a number of tax possessions under the jurisdictions of the city. These parcels of land and buildings could provide further recreational opportunities for neighborhood residents. Under current tax title regulations in the city a private developer can petition the city to purchase property through this program. Once the petition is made, other agencies can comment on the parcel in question and can recommend for or against the purchase. This plan recommends that when the city acquires several parcels at a time, a list and description of the parcels be circulated to various departments for comment. This will allow the recreation department to identify parcels suitable for open space use and automatically take that parcel off the list of for sale properties. By pursuing this procedure, the various departments will know firsthand what parcels are available and make provisions so that they are kept in the city's possession.

Properties belonging to Lowell that contain recreation facilities are further detailed in the Appendix of the report. State lands are predominately under the administration and management of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM); University of Massachusetts – Lowell; and the Department of Public Works (DPW). DEM Properties include much of the Locks and Canal areas and the state parks. DEM maintains and operates the 1,015 acre Lowell/Dracut/Tyngsborough State Forest as well as the 118 acre Lowell heritage State Park. These two sites allow a plethora of recreational and passive activities for all ages and disabilities. Federal properties consist primarily of United States Government buildings including the Courthouse, Postal Facility, and National Park Service property. They comprise only a very small percentage of the land area in Lowell.

To determine the extent and need for new park facilities citywide, the open space committee applied national standards to existing facilities to identify shortcomings. This analysis was applied to all major neighborhoods. Based on this analysis, several shortfalls were identified in both acreage and number of facilities. Information listed on the following pages outlines those national standards that are used to determine additional needs for athletic and recreational facilities.

8.2 NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The National Recreation Parks Association (NRPA) has developed guidelines for all communities to follow regarding the amount and location of various types of parks. It looks at three park systems, mini-park, neighborhood park, and community park; and determines how much acreage should be supplied per 1,000 residents. The chart on the next page details the recommendations that NRPA has developed.

Table 8-1
NRPA Guidelines Regarding Adequate Facilities Provisions

Component	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres/1,000 Population
Mini-Park	Less than ¼ mile radius	1 acre or less	0.25 to 0.5 Acres
Neighborhood Park/playground	¼ to ½ mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000	15+ acres	1.0 to 2.0 Acres

Community Park	Several Neighborhoods 1 to 2 mile radius	25+	5.0 to 8.0 Acres
----------------	---	-----	------------------

Source: NRPA Guidelines

Based on these guidelines, all neighborhoods in Lowell were analyzed to see where shortfalls existed. NRPA standards recommend that between 6.25 and 10.5 acres of developed open space and parkland be allotted for every 1,000 residents. Lowell has approximately 3-5 acres of developed open space for every 1,000 residents. With proposed acquisitions by the city, the total will increase to 4-6 acres per 1,000 residents.

In order to meet the open space need of Lowell residents, the City has recently undertaken measures to provide additional open space and recreational use. On August 9, 2000 the City Council unanimously voted to use the proceeds from the sale of 1095 Westford Street, a commercial piece of land, for the acquisition and design of the Concord River Neighborhood Trail.

8.3 PUBLIC CONSERVATION AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES BY NEIGHBORHOOD

8.3.1 THE ACRE (CENSUS TRACTS 3107, 3108, 3110, 3111)

The 2000 Census figures show a population of 12,072 for the Acre. Based on the NRPA guidelines, this area would require approximately 82-133 acres of developed recreational land. The neighborhood currently has 18.2 acres that are contained in the following parks:

Adams Park	1.0 Acres
Bartlett Field	4.0 Acres
Cross Street Park	0.2 Acres
Moody Street Playground	1.0 Acre
North Common	3.0 Acres
Western Canal Project	<u>4.0 Acres</u>
	18.2 Acres

Located in the above mentioned parks are the following passive and active recreational facilities.

- 1 Baseball diamond
- 1 little league baseball diamond
- 1 Softball diamond
- 1 multipurpose field
- 4 tennis courts (lighted)
- 3 Basketball courts (1 lighted)
- 6-chess/checker game tables
- 1 sandbox area
- 2 tot areas
- 1 set of bleachers
- 49 benches

Based on the necessary equipment and facilitates standard for Lowell, there is a need for:

- 1 handball court

- 2 tennis courts
- 1 baseball diamond

All of these parks are developed and are well distributed throughout the neighborhood. Given the lack of available open space within the neighborhood, any additional facilities would have to be put into the existing parks and playgrounds. The Canalway Project located along the Western Canal will provide the neighborhood with much needed open space. It will provide passive recreation where one can walk, sit, picnic, and bike.

8.3.2 BACK CENTRAL (CENSUS TRACTS 3119, 3120)

The 1990 Census figures show a population of 5,643 for Back Central that would require approximately 35-59 acres of developed recreational land to satisfy NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood currently has 28.27 acres of parks contained in the following parks:

Carter Street Playground	0.50 Acres
Concord Riverbank Park	2.72 Acres
Ducharme Park	0.51 Acres
Father Kirwin Park	1.54 Acres
Oliveria Park	1.83 Acres
Rotary Club Park	0.86 Acres
South Common	<u>20.31 Acres</u>
	28.27 Acres

Located in the above parks are the following selective facilities:

- 1 baseball diamond
- 1 soccer field
- 4 basketball courts (3 lighted)
- 3 tennis courts
- 1 swimming pool
- 1 running tract
- 1 fitness course
- 4 tot areas
- 1 set of benches
- 14 benches

In comparing the above facilities with established standards for Lowell, there is a need for the following:

- 1 handball court
- 1 tennis court
- 2 volleyball courts

Most of those facilities can be accommodated at the existing parks and playgrounds. The Concord Riverbank is an undeveloped area that could be enhanced by providing a trail system, benches, and a picnic area, which would give this section of Lowell a fine passive recreational area. Many studies have been completed regarding the potential recreational use of this area. In August 2001 the City Council voted to dedicate the proceeds from a commercial property to the design of the Concord River Neighborhood Trail. The Concord River, in certain sections, drops in elevation providing an excellent area for whitewater rafting and kayaking. This section along

with a bike/pedestrian path could provide a multitude of recreational activities for both local and regional residents. Additionally, two large parks (Fort Hill and Shedd) in neighboring South Lowell provide recreational sites for the residents of Back Central.

8.3.3 BELVIDERE / SOUTH LOWELL (CENSUS TRACTS 3123, 3124, 3125)

The 1990 Census shows a population total for these two neighborhoods of 15,924 which translates into a needed requirement of 100-167 acres of developed recreational land to satisfy NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood currently has 116 acres contained in the following parks:

Alumni Field	5.50 Acres
Cawley Park	13.92 Acres
Commonwealth Avenue Playground	0.50 Acres
Fayette Street Playground	0.70 Acres
Finneral Park	0.08 Acres
Fort Hill Park	34.40 Acres
Kitteridge Park	1.80 Acres
Knott Park	52.55 Acres
Stratham Playground	<u>5.00 Acres</u>
	115.62 Acres

Located in the above parks are the following selective facilities:

- 2 baseball diamonds (1 lighted)
- 3 little league baseball diamonds
- 4 multi-purpose playing fields – football/soccer
- 1 football field
- 8 tennis courts (lighted)
- 4 basketball courts (lighted)
- 2 ¼ mile running tracks
- 2 picnic areas
- 1 swimming pool
- 5 tot areas
- 4 sets of bleachers
- 58 benches

In comparing the above facilities with established standards for Lowell, there is a further need to supply the following:

- 1 handball court
- 1 volleyball court

These needed facilities can be provided for on existing parks and playgrounds in the neighborhood. According to the NRPA standards, the section of Lowell containing Belvidere and South Lowell has a sufficient amount of recreational land and only need two other sports facilities. The proposed expansion of the Cawley Stadium will include new soccer field and improved bath and locker facilities. The soccer field will provide an excellent location for area teams to play and practice soccer.

8.3.4 CENTRALVILLE (CENSUS TRACTS 3102, 3103, 3104)

The 1990 Census figures show a population of 15,808 for Centralville that would require approximately 99-166 acres of developed recreational land to satisfy NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood currently has 64.85 acres contained in the following parks.

Christian Hill Reservoir	14.96 Acres
First Street Playground	1.48 Acres
Gage Field	21.08 Acres
Hovey Field	8.54 Acres
McPhearson Playground	8.57 Acres
Monsignor Keenan Playground	0.33 Acres
St. Louis Playground	9.30 Acres
Varnum Park	0.50 Acres
Veterans Memorial Park	<u>0.09 Acres</u>
	64.85 Acres

The parks are well distributed throughout the neighborhood, but national standards suggest that approximately 35 additional acres are necessary to accommodate the neighborhood's population. The eight parks in this section of Lowell contain the following selective facilities:

- 2 little league baseball diamonds
- 2 baseball diamonds
- 5 softball diamonds (1 lighted)
- 2 football/soccer fields
- 5 basketball courts
- 8 tennis courts (3 lighted)
- 1 Volleyball court (lighted)
- 1 swimming pool/wading pool
- 6 tot areas
- 1 picnic area
- 1 play area
- 2 sets of stands
- 43 benches

Comparing the above facilities with established recreation standards for Lowell, there is a need for the following facilities:

- 1 handball court

When examining the facilities available to Centralville residents, it is quite apparent that this particular neighborhood has the most facilities in the City. Gage Field lost approximately 5 acres for a new school to serve the Centralville residents. Needed facilities can all be provided on existing parks and playgrounds. The reservoir on Christina Hill is currently being capped with the provision that about 1 foot of water will remain exposed. In the winter, this site could be an excellent skating area if the water freezes adequately.

8.3.5 DOWNTOWN (CENSUS TRACT 3101)

The 1990 Census figures show a population of 3,881 for Downtown Lowell which require approximately 24 to 41 acres of developed recreational land as suggested by NRPA standards.

This section of the city contains approximately 2.3 acres of parkland found at the following locations.

Lucy Larcom Park	1.27 Acres
Moody Street Playground	<u>1.00 Acres</u>
	2.27 Acres

Based on NRPA guidelines, this neighborhood requires more mini and neighborhood park areas. There are no athletic fields or active recreational facilities available to the residents of Downtown. Additional park facilities are needed in this section of Lowell. As it contains much of the central business district, little room is available to install new equipment or acquire open space. The downtown area also contains a large elderly population who has different recreational needs. Accordingly, the city needs to properly plan for this segment and provide more passive recreational opportunities where the elderly can sit and meet with friends.

8.3.6 HIGHLANDS (CENSUS TRACTS 3112, 3113, 3114, 3115, 3116, 3117, 3118)

According to the 1990 Census, the population of the Highlands is 29,631. This would require approximately 185-311 acres of developed recreational land to satisfy the NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood currently has 65.15 acres contained in the following parks:

Amory Park	0.75 Acres
Avenue A Playground	2.78 Acres
Callery Park	5.50 Acres
Colburn Park	0.25 Acres
Daley School Field	12.0 Acres
Doane Street Park	1.40 Acres
Durkin Playground	1.55 Acres
Hadley Field	5.88 Acres
Highland Park	19.6 Acres
Lincoln Square Park	0.50 Acres
Morey Street Playground	1.20 Acres
Perry Playground	0.32 Acres
Tyler Park	2.00 Acres
Clemente Park	3.00 Acres
Crowley Park	0.50 Acres
Edwards Soccer Field	<u>8.00 Acres</u>
	65.15 Acres

Most parks in the Highlands area are well distributed. However, total acreage available is below the recommended levels suggested by the NRPA. Located in the parks and playgrounds listed above area the following selective facilities:

- 5 baseball diamonds
- 1 football/soccer field
- 2 softball diamonds (lighted)
- 1 little league baseball diamond
- 1 volleyball court
- 1 street hockey court
- 7 basketball courts (5 lighted)
- 9 tennis courts (7 lighted)
- 1 swimming pool

- 10 tot areas
- 3 sets of bleachers
- 56 benches
- 1 skate board park

In comparing the above facilities with established standards for Lowell, there is a need for:

- 1 handball court
- 4 tennis courts
- 4 volleyball courts
- 3 softball diamonds

The recreational needs of the Highlands can be provided at existing parks and playgrounds. In addition, Mount Pleasant Golf course provides a large amount of open space that is accessible to the public in the winter for cross country skiing and sledding.

8.3.7 PAWTUCKETVILLE (CENSUS TRACT 3105, 3106)

The 1990 Census figures show a population of 14,355 for Pawtucketville that would require approximately 90-145 acres of developed recreational land to satisfy NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood currently has 95.36 acres contained in the following parks:

Bourgeois Park	0.25 Acres
Campbell Park	2.53 Acres
Father McGuire Playground	4.58 Acres
Fells Playground	0.30 Acres
Flaggies Park	4.50 Acres
LeBlanc Park	60.0 Acres
Pawtucket Memorial Park	1.20 Acres
Wang Parcel	20.0 Acres
Wannalancit Park	<u>2.00 Acres</u>
	95.36 Acres

Located in the above parks are the following selective facilities:

- 2 baseball diamonds (1 lighted)
- 1 softball diamond
- 1 little league baseball diamond
- 4 basketball courts (lighted)
- 2 tennis courts
- 1 volleyball court
- 2 swimming pools
- 4 tot areas
- 1 set of bleachers
- 4 picnic areas
- 21 benches

In comparing the above facilities with established standards for Lowell, there is a need for:

- 1 handball court
- 4 tennis courts

- 3 volleyball courts
- 2 softball diamonds

A vital asset to this neighborhood, Lowell and the towns of Dracut and Tyngsborough is the presence of the 1,015-acre Lowell/Dracut/Tyngsborough State Forest located in the northwest portion of Lowell. This major park provides a variety of recreational opportunities such as biking and mountain biking, hiking, nature walking, picnicking, fishing, field sports and winter sports such as ice skating, sledding, cross-country skiing, and birding. The city has also recently acquired the 20-acre former Wang Company parcel on the northern bank of the Merrimack River near the M/A Com building. This acquisition is a valuable addition to the current mix of recreational properties as well as remedying the loss due to the school construction program. The city would like to use the facility for outing, picnicking, weddings, and church related events on the weekends and playing fields during the week. The city currently lacks a large area where groups can meet and use the athletic fields. This parcel will also be ideal for those events as it has restroom facilities and has parking available for large groups. In addition, the City of Lowell Water Department has agreed to transfer ownership of a 12 acre parcel to the Parks and Recreation Department for use as new recreational fields and picnic space to serve the many condominium properties in the Northwest section of the city.

The above listings describe open space and parks in the various neighborhoods of the city. This is not a complete listing of city owned land. It only describes the available parks and recreation land available to all residents. The neighborhood summaries are useful for identifying existing facilities.

8.3.8 SACRED HEART (CENSUS TRACT 3122)

Sacred Heart contains a present population of 4,741, which would require approximately 30-49 acres of developed recreational land according to NRPA guidelines. The neighborhood has 25.91 acres of recreational land contained in the following parks:

Manning Field	11.0 Acres
McInerney Playground	0.35 Acres
O'Donnell Park	<u>14.56 Acres</u>
	25.91 Acres

Located in the above parks are the following selective facilities:

- 1 little league baseball diamond
- 1 softball diamond
- 3 basketball courts (lighted)
- 1 baseball diamond (lighted)
- 1 football field
- 1 swimming pool
- 2 tot areas
- 1 handball court
- 5 tennis courts
- 22 benches

In comparing the above available facilities with established standards for Lowell, there is a need for:

- 1 volleyball court
- 1 soccer field

Park facilities that do exist are well supplied with passive and active recreational facilities, however, more developed parks is needed to serve the entire population. Most of these additional facilities can be provided on existing parks and playgrounds. There are extensive open acres in the form of cemeteries, which compromise much of the land area in Sacred Heart. These sites can be valuable for passive recreation such as walking, jogging, biking, and cross-country skiing.

8.4 STATE-OWNED LAND

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns many parcels of land throughout the city for use by various agencies. The DEM, the University of Massachusetts – Lowell and the DPW collectively manage all of the state owned properties. All of the DEM holdings are associated with the Lowell/Dracut/Tyngsborough State Forest, the canal system and the Merrimack River Heritage Park system. The DPW maintains several parcels along the river as open space. See Appendix B for a complete list of state owned parcels in Lowell and the resource they provide. The Lowell Department of Planning and Development is petitioning the state to transfer the title of several parcels of land along the Merrimack River to DEM. This will enable DEM to complete construction of a riverwalk path that begins near the Duck Island Treatment Plant and ends near the Tyngsborough town line. This recreational link will greatly enhance opportunities for residents north of the Merrimack River. It will provide almost a continuous park along the north bank of the river providing a site for beach activities, walking, running, picnicking and will include a new boat launch.

8.5 NON-PROFIT LANDS

The Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, a local land trust, owns the following property

- Spalding House - 5,000 sq. ft
- Totman Road - 69,024 sq. ft
- 181 W. Meadow - 3.85 acres
- 36 Merrill St. - Jollene Dubner Park (part of) - 2700 sq. ft
- 16 Nicole Drive - 1.88 acres

8.6 OTHER PUBLIC, UNPROTECTED LANDS

The University of Massachusetts-Lowell is a major landholder in the city. The State University occupies approximately 155 acres of land that it uses for academic, housing university support and recreational facilities. The university has embarked on an expansion plan to be called the Mill campus, which will result in the development o 31.3 acres of industrially zoned land. The land, previously occupied by the Lawrence Manufacturing Company, will be stripped clean of many buildings and surface parking lots on the site. Some of the buildings of historical significance will be renovated for university use. In its place, the university will construct several academic buildings, dormitories, offices and a student center.

As part of the recreational component, a field house and swimming pool will be added to provide more facilities for students, faculty, employees and area residents. The plan also calls for extensive use of pedestrian links around the campus buildings to minimize vehicle traffic. Other added recreational facilities include 3 new tennis courts, a baseball diamond, and a football/soccer field. The university also owns a four-acre parcel along the north side of the river that currently houses a soccer field. This area sees heavy use by area soccer league. Unfortunately, this parcel of land, located in the floodplain, is subject to seasonal flooding.

The region is fortunate to have many fine hospitals that provide extensive medical care. These facilities also occupy large tracts of land. Lowell General Hospital owns 64 acres of land. St. Johns Hospital. Part of the Saints Memorial Medical Center owns 8 acres of property adjacent to the Merrimack River. St. Joseph Hospital, the other half of the Saints Memorial Medical Campus, occupies 5.9 acres of land near the University of Massachusetts – Lowell dormitory facilities. Other large institutional landholders include the churches, private parochial schools and several non-profit groups.

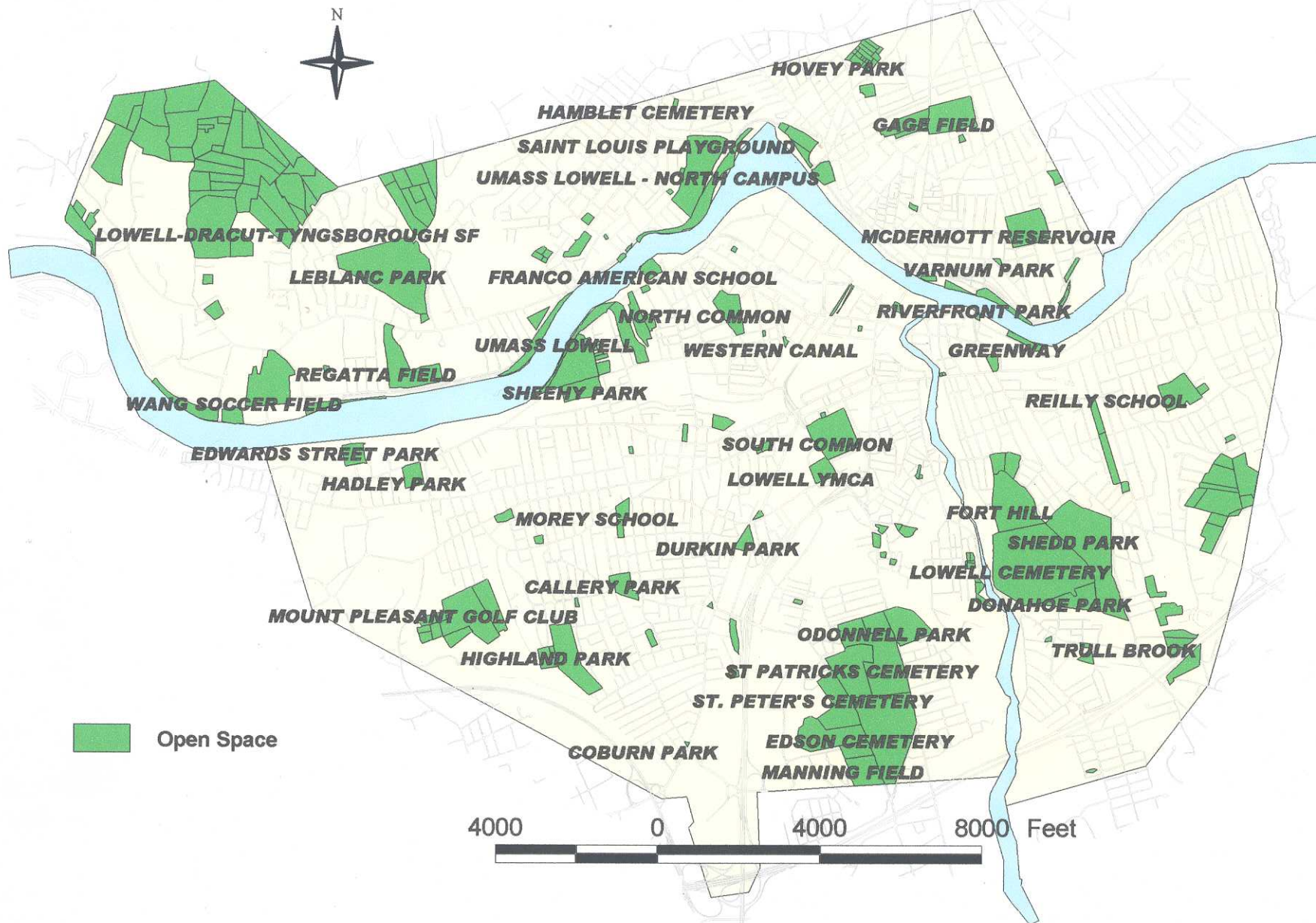
8.7 PRIVATE RECREATION LANDS

Owners of recreational land are also eligible for taxpayer relief under state regulation. Chapter 61B applies to land not less than 5 acres that is maintained in its natural state. Allowed uses on the property include hiking, camping, nature study, boating, golfing, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, skiing, swimming, hang gliding, archery, and target shooting. In the City of Lowell, three properties are protected under Chapter 61B designation. One private country club, Mt. Pleasant Golf Course, operates an eighteen-hole course in the western part of the city, near the Chelmsford line. The second property is the United States Bunting Club, which is located on Boylston Street near the Billerica town line. Approximately 11.50 acres of this property are protected under 61B regulations. The third property is the Hole 'N One driving range located on Phoenix Avenue. This property is 7.52 acres in size and is used for golf practice. There is another private recreational golf club located on the Lowell/Tewksbury town line. Access to the site is through Lowell, however, a majority of the property is located in Tewksbury.

8.8 MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL HOLDINGS

Several private, not-for profit institutions occupy large parcels of land throughout the city. Many of these parcels have recreational facilities on the premises that are not always open to the general public. A is to work with these landowners in order to open and maintain access to the facilities by the public. The Greater Lowell YMCA owns 5 acres of land. The Lowell Boys Club owns 2 acres of land that contains recreational sites. It provides sporting activities for area school age children. The Lowell Girls Club also owns several acres of land. Many religiously affiliated schools around the city own parkland for students and neighborhood residents.

The region is fortunate to have many fine hospitals that provide extensive medical care. These facilities also occupy large tracts of land. Lowell General Hospital owns 64 acres of land. St. Johns Hospital. Part of the Saints Memorial Medical Center owns 8 acres of property adjacent to the Merrimack River. St. Joseph Hospital, the other half of the Saints Memorial Medical Campus, occupies 5.9 acres of land near the University of Massachusetts – Lowell dormitory facilities. Other large institutional landholders include the churches, private parochial schools and several non-profit groups.



PARKS

Lowell COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

January 2002 Existing Conditions



//cityhall-A2/Gisdata\$/arcview/arc_projects/comprehensive_plan/parks



Division of Planning
and Development